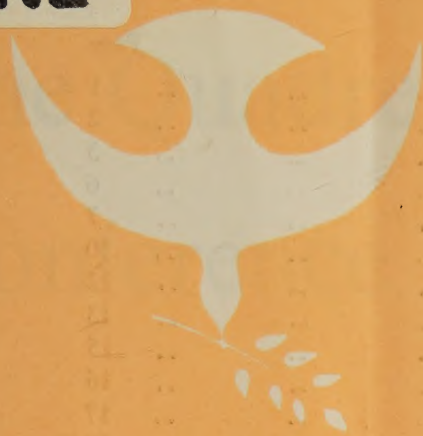


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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

● JULY 1992

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THE C.S.I. WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP



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JUSTICE, PEACE & INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

JULY 1992

EDITOR

REV. DASS BABU

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POST BOX No. 4906, CATHEDRAL ROAD, MADRAS-600 086

Phone: 471266

All remittances and communications regarding subscriptions and advertisements to be sent to the Hon. Business Manager.

HON. AGENT IN U.K.

Rev. J. L. Thomas, Bronheulwen, Chapel Lawn Road

Bucknell, Shropshire Sy 7 OAH, UK

Tel. No- 05 474 675

RATES OF SUBSCRIPTION PER ANNUM

Subscription in India	..	Rs. 25.00
Single Copy	..	Rs. 3.00

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U.K.	£ 2.50	£ 6.00
Australia	\$ 5.00	\$ 10.00
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25 Years Ago!

Sister E. Bending, Sister N. Mariamma and companion decided to run a Summer School in Nandyal as they had done a good deal of work in the Nandyal division during the year. As they chose the theme The Holy Bible, invited speakers, planned their visit to surrounding villages to call in the women and collect their offerings of grain.

Bishop Partridge of the C.I.P.B.C. in Nandyal offered the use of his compound for the Summer School. Great was their joy when Mrs. Partridge asked whether women of the C.I.P.B.C. might also join in. This was an opportunity for working together and helping one another as seemed God given.

As the women's group toured the villages in the Nandyal Division they went to several places where there are C.S.I. and C.I.P.B.C. congregations. It was good to be able to call in the women irrespective of their affiliation.

SISTER E. BENDING

—Churchman

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The Quadrennial Conference



The Eighth Quadrennial Conference of the CSI Women's Fellowship held at the CMS College, Kottayam, from 21st to 24th of May, was an occasion for the people to celebrate and witness to God's sustaining and renewing purpose for the whole creation. Nearly 350 delegates from the 21 dioceses and about 40 male members, two from each diocese who were specially invited, was a gesture appreciated very much, the four Bishops from the Kerala region—Bishop M. C. Mani, Bishop Sam Amirtham, Bishop Kuruvilla and Bishop K. J. Samuel and the Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church and the Catholicos of the local Church, leaders and dignitaries made a festivity of the Conference.

Mrs. Mani Kochamma, the President of the Women's Fellowship, with the help of Bishop M. C. Mani and other diocesan leaders spared no efforts to make the Conference a successful one. Mrs. Rani Moses, the Vice President, Miss Suguna Devasundaram and Mrs. Dorothy Ebenezer, the Treasurer worked hard to make the conference a memorable one.

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation was the theme.

Moderator Ryder Devapriam accompanied by his spouse Mrs. Sarojini, inaugurated the Conference on 21st. His inaugural address was aimed to create awareness that the lack of peace, injustice and the threat to creation are interconnected challenges for Church activity. Expressing his confidence in the activities of the Fellowship he said that the Women's Fellowship can engage itself in the struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creation and make that engagement evident in the united actions.

Bishop Sam Amirtham conducted the Bible Studies. He brought in the theological affirmations on the theme. He explained, at times through singing, the inter-dependability of the tenets in the theme and called for a mutual response.

Mrs. T. B. D. Krubaveni Prakasarao, Mrs. F. Suma Bailey; Dr. Devadas Ammal presented papers dwelling upon the most pertinent issue which the whole human community is facing today. With one accord they pleaded with the churches that they should strive to establish firmly the solidarity of the Churches with women which becomes the Body of Christ and the vision of peace, thus becoming a body of organic Oneness for the culture of non-violence in which the sex discrimination is overcome and a community of women and men is realised.

Environment and Ecological concerns were also discussed at length in one of the papers. Preserving the gift of the earth atmosphere to nurture and sustain the world's life; building a culture that can live in harmony with creation's integrity—were the issue dealt with.

The Conference concluded with the Eucharist and felicitations to the senior workers and special felicitations to Miss Suguna Devasundaram who was to retire a month later after serving the Women's Fellowship as its General Secretary for more than a decade. The symbolism was profound. The people celebrated their fellowship with God and with one another.

The Conference had tackled the crucial issues which affect justice, peace and integration of creation in our age. Through Jesus Christ, God's promise of Shalom, Peace is operated in the world as a reality of hope that challenges everyone to a new sense of realism. The Holy Spirit is at work, empowering, renewing, challenging, affirming, rekindling love and hope. The Holy Spirit opens the way towards fulfilment of the new creation in our time. This Biblical truth was regained and affirmed at the Conference and it was a rewarding experience to discern the presence of God the Holy Spirit in the Conference. Kudos to the Women's Fellowship of the Church of South India.

—DASS BABU

ORTHODOXY AND ORTHOPRAXIS

One young person in a study group asked me the meaning of the word orthodoxy. I tried to explain the meaning of the word with a small 'o' and a capital 'O'. Orthodoxy with a small 'o' means right doctrine or dogma; Orthodoxy with a capital 'O' refers to a part of the very early tradition in the church and the section which claims to continue and guard that tradition. I was glad this young person was eager to learn a new word, a word related Christian faith.

We all keep on learning new words. Orthodoxy is a word that I learnt during my student days. Orthopraxis is a word that I came across only a few years ago.

Orthopraxis means right practice or action. Actually praxis is theologically a complex and deep word, meaning not just practice, but an action dialectically related to reflection; reflective practice or reflective obedience. For the present, it is enough to understand it as right Christian obedience or correct Biblical living. One of the purposes of these series of reflections is to simplify theology, without making it simplistic. So scholars, please forgive.

These days, there is so much talk about right doctrine, or right formulation of our faith. Faith is a relationship with God; that of trust, surrender, and love. A relationship can seldom be adequately formulated in words. And even if it can be, it can never fully express the depth or scope of that relationship. For example, the formulation of the love of any child towards its mother, cannot be the final criterion of the real measure of that love. Words are too poor to be a vehicle to convey the intimacy of a relationship as sacred as a child's love. This is not to deny the need and significance of right formulation. We need it, as much as the child needs to struggle to put into words the love for its parents.

I have a fundamentalist friend who summarises the Christian faith as follows. 'Jesus is my Saviour. He has forgiven all my sins. He will take me to heaven after death'. I completely agree with this, and say this with as much conviction as his. But I have to say a lot more; And I further believe that I will never be able to

put that Christian faith adequately. And even if I put in better formulation than I am capable of now, my Jesus will still be far more glorious than my words. My Jesus I tell my friends, is all that you say, and much more. I stand in awe and wonder before the cross of Jesus Christ. That amazing grace and love is too wonderful for me to packed in a few phrases!

But the problem for me with this friend and many other similar friends of mine who insist on right words, or if that matter insist on avoiding wrong words as in the recent controversy over the words of a prayer formulated by the famous evangelist of Sri Lanka Dr. D. T. Niles, is not this at all.

Rather that they do not insist with equal insistence on right practice. Some of them practice caste, they look for auspicious time; they receive and give dowry; they are arrogant and proud; they cannot forget to forgive; they worship money and influence; they stoop to any means to grab them. They buy and misuse power. They tolerate evil and injustice. It is not that others who hold a different view on faith are better than these Christians obedience. But some of them at least realise and confess that *both* their words and their actions fall short of God's glory. I would like to hold that disobedience of God's word and disregard of God's will as as sinful and undesirable as incorrect doctrine and fallacious formulation of faith.

In other words, orthopraxis is as important as orthodoxy. Doing God's will is as imperative as saying the right word about God's will; obeying God's Word is as essential as saying the right word about God's Word. James counselled us to be doers of the word and not speakers of the Word.

In fact, Jesus taught us that some of those who called him Lord, Lord, and even managed to do some wonderful will be told, He did not know them. For they had not done the will of God (Mt. 5:21). Jesus seems to be saying Orthopraxis is more important than Orthodoxy.

—SAM AMIRTHAN

Ecumenical Decade—Women's Challenges and Responses*

MRS. T. KRUPAVENI PRAKASARAO, *Vijayawada*

The subject for exploration in this session is, Women's challenges and responses in the Ecumenical Decade. During the revival meetings, we know, at the end an appeal is given to induce people to come forward and commit themselves to the Lord. This quadrennial is not a revival meeting but it is an opportunity for us not only to learn from our Bible studies and themes but also to think and find out the ways and means of achieving better results through formulating our plans. Therefore this session is planned, to direct to certain challenges in our work during this decade. Though the subject given is Challenges and Responses, I will confine myself to the Challenges and leave the responses to you for the group discussions.

This decade, as we all know, is the Ecumenical Decade CHURCHES IN SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN. We know what our challenges are during this decade, we have to know something about the decade itself.

The World Council of Churches has declared this decade i.e. from 1988-98 as the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in solidarity with women. This decade is the fruit of age-long struggle of women. The pre-history of this will go back to 1948, when a woman, Ms. Sarah Chacko from India, evidently from Kerala, presented a report on 'Status of Women in the Church' at the first World Council of Churches Assembly in Amsterdam. 'In 1949 a commission on the life and work of women in the church was created'. 'In 1954 a new department was created in World Council of Churches and it was called department of the 'Cooperation of men and women in church and society'.

In 1974, the sub-unit on Women in the Churches and Society convened a world consultation on discrimination against women;

In 1975, in the 5th Assembly of the World Council of Churches held at Nairobi, the plenary session was given Women's issues and the Assembly voted to study the challenges on community of women and men in the churches.

In 1981, an International conference was organised at Sheffield on the topic, "the Web of oppression". In the same year, the World Council of Churches agreed that women make over half of the constituents of the member churches and therefore, the principle of partnership of men and women means equal participation.

This paper was presented at the Quadrennial conference of the Women's Fellowship held at the CMS College, Kottayam.

JULY 1992

* In 1983 at Vancouver, for the first time in the history of World Council of Churches Assembly, one third of the delegates were women, and we are proud that our General Secretary, Miss Suguna Devasundaram represented the CSI Women's Fellowship in World Council of Churches Assembly.

— This is how women's struggle over the ages took a shape. I am giving you this brief history of the Women's Struggle at the World Council of Churches level. But we know that there are countless number of struggles at the local level in all Churches. Apart from this struggle in the Church, secular women outside the church all over the world have been continuing their struggle for peace and justice to women which resulted in the United Nations declaring 1975 as the International Year of the Women and 1975-85 as the Women's Decade.

The one pertinent question the women at the helm of affairs have been asking throughout, is 'What do you women want?'. It is a question most of us are asked even today. Do we know what we want? What is it we want and what is it we are struggling for? At once we get a question, that, in spite of the fact that women form the majority in the Church, why is it that they have not found place in the administration? Yes. As feminist Biblical scholar, Elizabeth Schussler writes in her article on 'The Invisibility of Women in the Church', 'Women are not only the silent majority in the Church but they are the silenced majority'. Over centuries, Women in the Church are silenced, mis-quoting the comments of St. Paul in his Epistles, about women 'totally misunderstanding his own attitude to women in the Church, not realising that the negative remarks at women were meant to minimise the pagan cultic-oriented behaviour of women within the life and witness of the Christian community in certain local congregations of the early Church' as our former moderator Rt. Rev. Dr. Victor Prema Sagar said in his message to the All India Council of Christian women. Therefore, it is true that part of our struggle is for equal opportunities. But that is definitely not all. Then what is it we want?

Scriptures have been read and re-read, searched and re-searched. Theologians have explored the subject with a re-vision, as it is pointed out in our Bible Study by Bishop Sam Amritham, and finally it had to be agreed without any doubt, that, the WOMAN, who is created equally in God's image as man and who has been hitherto oppressed and humiliated, is to have the same dignity and integrity as the man. Yes, what we ask for is the human dignity with which we are created—in the likeness of God Himself.

Therefore it was felt all over that the women, the millions and millions of them all over the world, need to be conscientised of their dignity and integrity in Christ. Though this awareness-creating process has been initiated, it is found that the development is very slow. Therefore, it was felt that the Church should take the responsibility of helping the women to face their problems and sustain their dignity, integrity and have a better life. The result of this thought is the reason why the WCC decided to launch the Ecumenical Decade (1988-98) of Churches in solidarity with women.

'The priorities and purposes set for the Decade are :

1. Women's full participation in church and community life.
2. Recognising women's perspectives and commitments to Justice, peace and integrity of creation.
3. Affirming women's decisive contribution in theology and spirituality.

To realise the above priorities, the churches are urged to act in solidarity with women by :

1. Ensuring the participation of women in various ministries including leadership in the church and community.
2. Working with women in overcoming social barriers.
3. Searching for ways and means to empower local women to continue to develop their own strategies and power.
4. Helping local women and men to become aware of women and women's concerns in different areas of the world.

Therefore, we know that this Decade is not just the Women's Decade but it is the Decade of the Churches, where women and men are equal partners. Thanks to the CSI women's fellowship for inviting men from the Churches as special invitees because it is we, both men and women who have to think together and plan together for achieving the goals of this decade.

Women's full participation means the presence of women in all the ministries of the Church including administration and ordained ministry, and sharing of power and resources in the church and community. This is the first challenge to us, women. We know from Gen. 1:27 that God created human beings as male and female, in His image, giving them equal responsibility of tending and ruling the rest of the creation. We also know from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians 3:28 that in Christ there is no difference, neither male nor female, but we are all one. Then why is it, that when the question of sharing power comes, both men and women feel very uncomfortable and embarrassed, and finally women drop out—or Subdued? It is because, as Ms. Boonmee Julkiree says, 'God's image in women is obscured and women feel that they are still in the tomb and covered with the stone not realising that the stone is already removed and woman who is part of the body of Christ is liberated.'

For example, in response to the priorities set by the WCC for Decade, we are fortunate that the Church of South India has resolved in principle to set apart 25% of membership to women in the synod. But what is happening in practice? During the last synod of 1992, few women were elected, fewer still have attended the synod and a very few if not none have taken active part

in the deliberations. Dear Sister, should we not justice when we are asked for full participation and opportunity is given? This is a challenge even to participants of this quadrennial. Participation does mean more attendance. What is our response to this challenge?

Now, we know that there is an unbelievable potential in our rural women. Our problem and challenge is to mobilise and empower them so that they can be equal partners and share the power and responsibilities in the church and community. Our job is to educate them and help them to remove the obstacles that prevent them from fully participating in the Church. How many of us know of the VELCOM (Vision for Equipping Local Congregations in Mission) program introduced by the Church of South India in our local churches? What is our role in that mission? Our CSI women's Fellowship has responded to this challenge and helped us to organise leadership training camps for women. Such trainings have to be continued at all levels. Tell our women, that they have power in Christ. Tell them of the instances where Jesus during His earthly ministry had upheld the women, Tell them about the women of the early Church. Tell them how even St. Paul appraised them as the co-workers in God's ministry. Tell them of the Women, St. Paul mentions in the 16th Chapter of his letter to the Romans. Dr. Christopher Dorai Singh, in his theme address at one of the quadrennials, said women are yoked with God in his ministry and that they are the powerhouses of the Church. We have this tremendous responsibility of conscientising our women and empowering them to shoulder the great task ahead of all of us.

The second priority set for the decade is 'Recognising Women's perspective and commitment to Peace, Justice and Integrity of creation'. What is Peace, Justice and Integrity in the present context?

We are created in the image of God. Therefore it is imperative that we, male and female, equally reflect the divine character, and identity. Both male and female are created to govern the rest of the creation and care for it. So the relationship between God and humankind (Women and Men), between Man and Woman as part of the creation, is the integrity of creation. When men and women uphold each other's dignity and live in harmony with the rest of the creation, peace and justice will prevail. During the last Synod, with the theme 'Good news for all creation', it was very clearly brought to light, the responsibility of men and women to preserve God's creation and to protect it. We, women, have a special role to play in this regard.

Justice in the Biblical context means Justice to the poor and oppressed. It can also be said justice is help and salvation to the poor. What is justice in the context of women? We know in our country, and throughout the world in general, women are the most widely exploited and the most severely oppressed group in society. Traditional customs and practices still continue to keep the 'woman' in her 'place' and not allow her an equal voice or role in the male dominated society, in spite of the constitutional protection given to her. We know it is no better in the Church. The message of justice from Jesus, 'Set the captives free' speaks directly to us and the church should be the instrument for making the Gospel known to them. As Christian women, we should take it as a challenge not only to speak of God's justice but also to demonstrate it by taking the side of the oppressed, and helping them out. Do we know the area

which women are oppressed and suffer injustice? Do we know of the social customs and religious practices in our areas, which oppress women? Do we know of the just personal laws of our country, which are different in different religions and are mostly unfavourable to women? Do we know the problems of child labour? Have we ever thought of the prostitutes and their problems? What is our reaction to the problem of illiteracy and ignorance specially among women? Do we know that this decade 1991 to 2000, is the SAARC decade of the girl child and do we have any concern for the problems of the girl child? As Christian women of the Church in South India, are we raising one little finger to help the oppressed in any one of the above areas? If we want to do anything for them we have to identify ourselves with them, walk side by side, hand in hand with them, to tell them that we are with them to work for justice in the

power of Christ. There are several voluntary secular organisations working for social justice in our areas. We, the Church women must join those groups in this struggle for justice. Can we do it? This is the challenge, you should take with you when you go back to your dioceses from this quadrennial.

Peace is not just the absence of war. Just keeping quiet and not responding to the acts of injustice is not peace. In the Biblical view, peace is SHALOM, the fullness of life. Peace is the normal condition of God's creation. Genesis tells us that God saw that every thing was good when he created it. But conflict is the result of human sin. Man started exploiting woman and the rest of the creation and that ended up in the present state of conflict. We, women have to work for that peace—SHALOM and this is our challenge.



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Role of Women in Restoring Eco Balance

MRS. FELICITA S. BAILEY, Dharwar

When one looks at the impending Ecological Disaster which looms like an ominous cloud threatening to engulf creation, one is forced to acknowledge the guilt of negligence, desecration, exploitation and wanton destruction of Nature. The nature which ever since Creation has been nothing less than a mother to us, caring for her children, sacrificing, nurturing and silently tolerant.

In this context I would like to quote from the Bible two contrasting readings. The first reading is from the Book of Genesis Chapter I and verse 29 and Chapter 2 verse 15.

'Then God said, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.'

'Then God who asked the man to till the earth also asked him to *keep it and care for it.*'

The second reading is from the Book of Isaiah Chapter 24 verses 4-6.

'The Earth mourns and withers, the world languishes and withers, the Heavens Languish with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants, for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth; and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched and free men are left.'

In the first reading we see the eternal love of the Creator, in creating the cosmos and handing it over to man; to care, cherish and protect. Therefore the Cosmos is a creating blessing, a matter of joy and celebration, over which the Creator appoints man as a steward, a caretaker. God who asked the man to till the earth also asked him to keep it and care for it.

But did man carry out his stewardship faithfully? What is the condition of the Cosmos gifted by God to man today? Has he done justice to the trust God placed in him of taking care of His creation? The second reading will reveal the answers:

'The earth mourns and withers'. What a profound truth: Today the earth is groaning with the abuses inflicted on it by man. Are we not pushing creation to its last limit? Our greed for wealth, power and material comfort has driven us to slander nature; to loot the earth of its glory, and to exploit senselessly selfishly, unmindful of the future. We hear of global warming, greenhouse effect, oxygen depletion, acid rain, ozone depletion etc. These are all new terms, Ecoterms, which reveal the pangs suffered by the earth.

Emission of gases, accumulation of carbon-di-oxide, industrial effluents, acid rain, drying up of natural sources of water which sustain the earth, have deprived the earth of its inherent strength. The earth's resources have been exploited and exhausted by man. The mighty power of the earth has been weakened because man has treated the Earth as a commodity to attain affluence and dominance over nature.

We talk about global warming, ozone depletion, acid rain etc. But do we really know the manifestations of Ecology? The world Ecology which is derived from the Greek word 'Oikos' literally means 'House or Home of Earth'. What a beautiful thought that the *whole cosmos is nothing but a home!* which man or woman can want to slander a home? Is it not a temple to be kept holy?

We women are the makers of a home. It is our duty to keep our homes clean, beautiful, attractive and make it a place of love, peace, justice and integrity. The same applies to the Cosmos which is also our home. Women from time immemorial have been closely and strongly connected with nature. It is not for nothing we have the term 'Mother land'. This shows how land is as venerable as the mother. In the Vedas the woman is symbolically identified with 'Shakti' or Power and is identified with Prakriti which is Nature.

Women are the original and constant companions of nature. They are the fruit gatherers, fuel gatherers and protectors of nature. They are naturally concerned with nurturing and not destroying life. Zeba Ali of Pakistan who works for International Union for Conservation of Natural Resources says 'Women are more susceptible to environmental problems because they are directly linked to these problems'.

Most of us are professionals like teachers, nurses, doctors etc. We can, in our own fields, not only in our homes, but in our places of work, try to spread this Ecovision of the Cosmos as a home. It is not enough to just propagate the planting of trees or preventing the felling. We should have better Action plans to carry out a crusade against Ecocide. We need to imitate Itwari Devi, Bachini Devi or Hima Devi in a similar context. To carry out our plans effectively we have to make Investments. These could be:

- (1) Financial Investments.
- (2) Physical Investments.
- (3) Intellectual Investments.
- (4) Land Investments.

Financial Investments may not be within everyone's capacity. But one could take the help of Government organisations, non-government organisations, the church and donors to help us set up Eco-centres, where we can educate our rural sisters and their children in Eco-knowledge and maintaining of Eco-balance. Eco-vision must be widened and this should be one of our primary duties.

The second investment is Physical investment or a laboured effort to spread Eco-knowledge. We could become members of one of the numerous organisations working for Eco-balance. In our own homes, offices, schools, hospitals, etc., we could carry out planting of useful plants. We could form societies to go to different parts of our State and create Eco-awareness among all classes of people from all walks of life. The Paris Conference of 1991 December called the Roots of the Future as Action Plans for the citizens of the world, chosen from a cross section of Society. This is called *Agenda Ya Wananchi* which is Swahili for *Children of the Earth*. It is to create Eco-awareness and to propagate restoration of Eco-Balance.

The third investment is Intellectual Investment. This means sharing your knowledge of Ecology with others. We should make known to others the benefits of greenery. Green vegetation acts as a natural sink for carbon-dioxide thus minimising the dangers to ozone depletion. Planting wisely can certainly contribute to Eco-balance. In dry areas Fodders trees could be planted.

We could teach our other sisters to make wide disposal of waste. That is segregating organic waste from Inorganic waste. Organic waste can be made useful by turning it into manure. Inorganic waste could to a certain extent be recycled. Even garbage can be made as green as in the case of Mahim Nature Park in Bombay. This Park is taking shape in the city's biggest trash heap, near the Mahim Creek. It will not only be the first ecological education park but also the first of its kind created out of a garbage dump!

We could also teach the use of Solar power, not only for cooking but for varied purposes. We learn about solar energy to motivate vehicles etc. But this is tapping at one per cent of this energy which is so freely and readily available. Yes, it is a fact that only one per cent solar energy is being used by us. It is also interesting to know that it is possible to generate power from Sea waves. The Times of India (March 17, 1992) gives information of an automobile engineer from Changanacherry near Kottayam, Mr. C. K. Prabhakaran Nair, who has invented a rather unique generator; which harnesses the power of sea waves to produce electricity. This mimics the process of constructing approach roads, reservoirs, dams and tunnels as is necessary in the case of hydel projects. What a revolutionary change!

We may be helpless against industrial pollution, soil erosion etc. but one could strive to restore the balance of nature by minimising ecocide, i.e. we should stop wasteful use of things linked with environment. We have to protect biodiversity from being challenged. Biodiversity is a term that represents the whole range of ecosystems, living organisms (including domesticated species) and genetic materials that humans share the Earth with. In the words of Ashish Kothari, 'over centuries, knowledge and materials from wild plants and animals have revolutionised agriculture, industry, medicine and other fields. Indeed biological resources remain the livelihood base of the majority of Earth's inhabitants'. Then shouldn't

it be our chief concern to prevent this Bio-diversity from total destruction?

Water is a precious commodity. We have to reach better and economic use of water. It is criminal to dry or change the natural course of waterways. There is an interesting account of irrigation in Vandana Shiva's book 'Staying Alive'. She says, 'Impounding rivers and streams for irrigation is not in itself an example of modern technology. The ancient anicuts on the Kaveri and Krishna rivers in South India are examples of how riparian societies in India used river water to increase benefits to man without violence to the river. In the indigenous system, water storage and distribution were based on nature's logic and worked in harmony with nature's cycles (P. 186 Staying Alive). Ex: 'The methods used by Major Sankey, the first British Engineer in erstwhile Mysore. But what is the order of the day in the present? It is not only mismanaging water resources but endangering the numerous species of marine life. It is a matter of sadness to note that drift net fishing on the high seas can have a serious impact on marine environment. Many endangered species are slaughtered as by catch. Fishing with nets that measure 30 miles in length, called strip mining of the ocean can only lead to 'Oceanic Deserts'.

Dr. Albert Manville, senior wildlife biologist for defenders of wild life said at an U.N. Press Conference, 'Not only are millions of marine resources being needlessly wasted but of greater concern is the almost certain collapse of numerous Marine Ecosystems that could feed the hungry world, produce medicines to cure the sick and contribute to the overall health of our planet and global ecosystems. Is this not a grave injustice to creation?

Now we come to the last investment i.e. Land Investment. Of course land is scarce but if we look closely we find that each and every city has open spaces lying waste. They may belong to government or quasi-government or even non-government organisations. With a little help from Eco-Conscious citizens we could vegetate these areas. This is no idle talk. I take pride in giving information that in my city Dharwar, a vast area of land belonging to the Railways and to the All India Radio have been planted with useful vegetation. This work was carried out successfully by a group of students, a few Eco-Conscious citizens and with the help of the Forest Department. It is a special importance that we understand that vegetation provides a natural cover for soil and therefore helps in minimising soil erosion.

At this juncture it is a very great importance we learn the usefulness of Forests. 'Grow more Trees' is a slogan often heard. What does it mean? It is a serious appeal to all men to try to restore the wealth of the Forests; which have been looted.

Forests stand for meeting the Five F's namely Fuel, Fodder, Food, Fibre and Fertilizers. Forests recycle oxygen and recharge atmosphere with oxygen. They maintain water yield and water balance. They discipline rivers and control the floods. They are the natural defenders of dust storms. They are the homes of numerous Tribals. Is it not sad to note that we have meted out nothing but injustice to these Tribals? Today they wander far into the empty coverless forests searching for water, fuel, food and fruits. Have we not disturbed the harmony of the forests? Many of the Tribal arts and crafts have come to a standstill as there is no support from the forests. Even in this State of Kerala many Herbal and traditional medicines from the forests have stopped because of the senseless destruction of medicinal plants.

Once again I am compelled to quote Vandana Shiva, 'As a Source of life Nature was venerated as sacred and human. Evolution was measured in terms of man's capacity to merge with her rhythms and patterns, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually' (P. 56 Staying Alive).

Nature and Woman are producers of life. We should protect nature from destruction.

We as women are better communicators. We make friends faster and can convince people. It is in our hands to restore Eco-Balance by unitedly working against Ecocide. For this it is essential that we identify ourselves with nature. I am reminded of the words of the famous Feminist poet, writer Susan Griffin :

' This earth is my sister,
I admire her daily grace
Her silent daring,
And we admire the
Strength in each other
All that we have lost
And all that we have suffered.'

What a beautiful identification with nature ! Unless we identify ourselves with the Earth, with Nature we cannot succeed in imparting Eco-knowledge.

Eco-vision should enable us to think wisely, live wisely and act wisely for the benefit of future generations. It is enough if we bequeath materialistic wealth for our future generations. Are cement homes and paper money the only requirements for a safe and healthy life ? What kind of a world do we want to bequeath to our inheritors ? Do we want them to go round with skin cancer, blindness from cataracts due to the thinning of the ozone layers ?

Do we want them to be deranged, deformed and disabled ?

The last two hundred years have been a destructive period. We have polluted the soil, water and air, we have driven many human societies and countless wildlife species to extinction. We have dammed the rivers and torn down the ancient forests. We have poisoned the rivers and punched holes in the sky. But now 'let us as stewards of God's creation,' give hope to a hopeless world.

It is imperative that the church play a vital role in restoring Ecobalance. The Holy Spirit in us should enable us to perceive the infinite preciousness of each and every creation of God. The church should not only preach but practise responsible stewardship towards creation. The church has varied functions. It has the power to serve fruitfully. The need of the hour is protecting life and nature gifted by the Creator. The church should do well to make Eco-Spirituality its primary function, and motivate the Christian communities in active and result-oriented stewardship of creation.

Let us not forget the motto used in this conference: Justice, Peace and Integrity. Justice reflected, revealed in our wise living, meeting out justice to all God's creation, justice in our dealings with nature, the supreme gift from God.

Peace not only among all races, religions, creeds, but peace within the whole creation. Resolve never to wage a war with nature or the creatures of nature. Let us share one integrity in restoring to some extent the original beauty of this world and to bring back the glory of Creation on this earth.

I close with the words of Mahatma Gandhi 'Nature is the finest Physician, one can be sure that nature will repair what man has damaged.' I add, *But should we continue to damage nature ?*



“Leave Her Alone...”*

REV. MARTINA EGENLAUT

Women in our world. How are they supposed to live? In Germany we used to speak about the 3 keys for the women—It sounds a little bit similar to the English words.

K for Kinder—that means children

K for Kuchi—that means kitchen

K for Kirche—that means church.

Women have to take care of their children, women have to work in the kitchen, women have to pray in the Church—quietly of course. Those days are over in Germany.

In India of course you have much worse examples for the discrimination of women.

Let us look at Mary in our story.

Perhaps at the first moment you may think that she is a very humble woman. I think her attitude is quite different. She shows devotion to Jesus but at the same time she is aware of the meaning of her deed.

Mary has got some really expensive oil. I think she has been saving the money for this oil for a long time.

And perhaps you would also like to ask why didn't she give the money to the poor? But this is not the theme in our story. What makes Mary behave in this way? I think it is her deep knowledge about Jesus. She really knows who He is. She feels it deep in her heart. There is a close connection between her and Jesus. He is the redeemer, the Messiah, her saviour. And the only thing for her to do is to give Him everything she has—not only that expensive oil but her deep love. She doesn't take care of her reputation for her behaviour

is quite shocking for the present men. A woman is not allowed to disturb men, a woman is not allowed to wear her hair loose in public, etc. But that is not important to her. She knows that she is right. And Jesus confirms her. He defends Mary, He rejects the objection of Judas.

‘Leave her alone’—that means: ‘let herself decide what she has to do. She will do the right thing. She doesn't need your advice. She even knows more than you, the men’—Jesus could have said.

‘It is for the day of my burial’ he says, Mary anoints Jesus, the living Jesus—for she knows He will always live for her. Mary anoints the Messiah. The disciples haven't realised that yet. Mary has a deeper knowledge than the disciples. ‘Leave her alone, she knows what she is doing’—that is the reaction of Jesus. And that is the word of Jesus to all people who know that Jesus is the Messiah, the redeemer, He doesn't distinguish between men and women.

He encourages all of us. When you know Me when you love Me then you will know what you have to do. You will be able to do the right things.

That means especially for us women: Jesus encourages us to find our way to show that we have recognised about Jesus to show our ideas of life. He will support us in our struggle. He wants us to be free to do what seems to be important for us. We can have the self-confidence to do the right like Mary. And when we love Jesus we will be able to give devotion to Jesus like Mary. Devotion full of consciousness of our dignity and importance.

Together we are God's people, men and women. Men and women are equal in God's eyes. And this is the basic issue in our struggle for justice, peace and integrity of creation. May God help us to find our way in our struggle.

* Sermon preached on 23rd May '92 at the C.S.I. Women's Fellowship Quadrennial Conference.

A Call to Choose Life

REV. DR. M. MANI CHACKO, M.A., B.D., M.Th., Ph.D (London)*



Introduction

I deem it a great honour and privilege to be invited to address you this morning. I am indeed grateful for this opportunity.

The text which I have chosen for our reflection is Deuteronomy 30 : 19.

‘ . . . I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse, therefore choose life. . . . ’

As I stand before you this morning, on the last day of the Eighth Quadrennial Conference of the Women's Fellowship of the Church of South India, I am reminded of a similar gathering in the Old Testament times. It was a similar gathering of people. It was also a concluding session of a particular period in the life of the people of Israel. The speaker at that gathering was their leader Moses. Moses, having led the people of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, having led them through the wilderness, having experienced the joys and sorrows of his people, was about to give up his leadership. A particular period in their life was about to be over. A new phase was about to begin. A new leadership was about to emerge. At this juncture Moses makes a moving farewell speech. One of the most central and challenging admonitions in this speech is the text which I have chosen for our thinking together :

A. First of all, there is the Etiological dimension of life.

Etiology is the study of causes and reasons. The very cause and reason for life is God himself. Life is God's and God's alone. Life is given by God and is taken away by Him when He wills. Life comes from God and returns to Him. God is the source of life. God is the owner of Life. This is what we see in the biblical account of creation. When God created man out of dust from the ground, he was mere dust. But what we read further is, God ‘ breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being ’ (Gen. 2 : 7). Because Life is God's and is given by God, life is sacred. It is holy and it has to be treated as sacred. It is also clear from the biblical records that God does not tolerate any threat to life. One of the outstanding examples is the story of Exodus. When the people realised that their life was being threatened, they cried out to God for help. God heard their cry and He commissions Moses to bring them out of their oppression by saying :

‘ I have seen the affliction of my people have heard their cry I know their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them. . . . (Ex. 3 : 7)

The story of Joseph is another example of God's disapproval of any threat to life. All his brothers plotted against Joseph, cast him into a pit and sold him into Egypt. But God undertook for him and he became the Governor of Egypt. When the famine struck the land his brothers came to Joseph for food. Joseph though acted in disguise to begin with, could not control himself, and disclosed his identity by saying : ‘ I am your brother Joseph whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves because you sold me here ; for God sent me before you to preserve Life ’ (Gen. 45 : 4, 5).

B. Secondly, there is the Ecumenical dimension of life.

Normally, the word ‘ ecumenical ’ or ‘ ecumenism ’ refers to the seeking of unity of the various Christian Churches throughout the world. I am using this word here with a wider dimension. Life needs to be preserved irrespective of caste, colour, creed, religion, sex or status. Life is not the prerogative or property of a select few, the rich and the powerful. God is a God of *all* and He gives life to *all*. In the biblical account of Creation, where we read, ‘ Then God said : Let us make man in our image ’ (Gen. 1 : 26) and ‘ God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became living being ’ (2 : 7), it is highly significant to note that the Hebrew word which is used for ‘ man ’ is *adham* and not *ish*. The Hebrew word *adham* stands for the whole human kind whereas the word *ish* means only man as an individual. So, it is to the whole *adham* that God gives life. Therefore, any threat to life, whether he or she is rich or poor, powerful or powerless, man or woman, upper caste born or lower caste born, cannot be justified and tolerated. But what happens in reality is just the opposite to this. In the last Friday's telecast of ‘ The world this week ’ on the T.V., there was a shocking report about how Asian women in the U.K. face abuse and torture from their husbands and the in-laws. One victim, when interviewed said ‘ We can somehow tolerate the abuse from our husbands but we cannot tolerate abuse and torture from our in-laws ’. These are a few examples of the many which point to the sad state of affairs of today. God challenges us to transcend these narrow-minded and wrongful attitudes and build a world order where life, irrespective of status, can be lived in fulness.

* Rev. Dr. M. Mani Chacko is on the faculty of the Gurukul Theological College, Madras.

Telemachus a 4th century monk realised this fact and died fighting for the preservation of life. One day when

was in Rome, he saw thousands of people thronging into a stadium. On enquiry he found out that the brutal gladiatorial game was on in the city. It was the time when the captives of war were brought to the centre of the stadium and they killed themselves by fighting each other. It was a time of enjoyment for the 80,000 people who had gathered there. But Telemachus could not tolerate this horrible sight of bloodshed and death. He decided within himself to put a stop to this inhuman game. With that firm determination, he occupied a seat in the front row. The whistle blew and the game began. Blood started flowing out and one by one began to die. As another pair started fighting, he got up from his seat, went straight into the centre of the stadium. He stood in between the two victims who were killing themselves. For a moment, the game stopped. The crowd became impatient. The whistle blew again. But Telemachus would not allow the game to continue. Again the whistle blew. A sword whirled in the air and Telemachus fell dead. That was the last day Rome saw the gladiatorial games. It was never held since. Life is sacred and it has to be preserved irrespective of the status.

C. Thirdly there is the Ecological dimension of life.

The word 'ecology' is derived from the Greek word *OIKOS*, which means 'House, Home or Earth'. Ecology, therefore, is that which concerns with the earth and its life processes.

It is a matter of shame that we, the church, had to wait so long to speak about ecology. It is only recently that we started speaking about 'ecology'.

The ecological dimension of our faith was always there in the biblical records. Due to our bias, prejudices and wrong norms of hermeneutics, we have failed to discover this dimension all along. One example of this wrong hermeneutics is the interpretation of Gen. 1:26.... 'let them have dominion over the fish of the sea... and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth'. The word 'dominion' has been traditionally interpreted as meaning 'unrestricted authority'. Clause Westermann, the famous Old Testament Scholar, has suggested that the word 'dominion' is to be understood from the context

of a kingly rule. A king has authority over his subjects. At the same time, he also has the responsibility to take care of his subjects. It is in this sense the word 'dominion' has to be understood. We have terribly misunderstood this word down through the ages. We have deprived the earth of its life processes by emission of poisonous gases into the atmosphere, deforestation, etc. We have not taken care of our environment. Instead we have polluted the atmosphere bringing threats to life on the earth. The earth or the *OIKOS* is part of God's creation and hence we cannot speak of *theology* without speaking of *ecology*. We need to develop an *eco-theology*, an *eco-spirituality*.

Conclusion

It is the building of this kind of a World Order that God is challenging us to engage in

- a world order where we realise afresh that life is God's and God's alone and hence no one has the right to take away life—the *etiological dimension of life*.
- a world order where we realise afresh that life needs to be preserved, irrespective of caste, colour, creed, religion or sex,—the *ecumenical dimension of life*.
- a world order where we realise that when we think and speak of life, it includes non human part of God's creation as well along with the human creation —the *ecological dimension of life*.

This is exactly what the theme of this conference 'Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation' is all about—creating a World Order, a new Kingdom of God where *life* is lived in all its fulness, with dignity and honour. 'I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse, therefore choose life'.

(Sermon preached during the Holy Communion Service held at the CSI Cathedral, Kottayam, on Sunday 24th May 1992, the last day of the 8th Quadrennial Conference of the Women's Fellowship of the Church of South India.)

NEWS from *All Over*

CHURCH OF ENGLAND SYNOD ON WOMEN'S ORDINATION

ROBERT NOWELL

How close the margin is between acceptance and rejection of the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Church of England was underlined at the February meeting of the church's general synod when it was given detailed figures of the voting on draft legislation at diocesan and deanery levels.

The measure was approved by 38 of the church's 44 dioceses, but, as the synod was reminded by David McClean, chairman of the synod's house of laity, the detailed figures indicated that, while more than two-thirds of members of the Church of England wanted the legislation to go ahead, among the clergy the level of support was marginally below that level. When the measure returns to the synod in November for final approval it will need two-thirds majorities in all three of the synod's houses of bishops, clergy and laity if it is to become law.

In diocesan synods, 66.6 per cent of the clergy and 68 per cent of the laity voted in favour, but in deanery synods only 65 per cent of the clergy and 66.7 per cent of the laity.

These figures were taken as supporting their case by both advocates and opponents of women priests. For Helen King of Epsom the latest figures showed 'very strong grass roots support' for the ordination of women to the priesthood, but for Nigel Kinsella, vicar of Bentham, Lancs, they showed 'massive disagreement and dissension', while Canon Terence Grigg, rector of Cottingham, North Humberside, warned that what lay ahead was division and disunity.

The Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins, reminded the Synod that the issue would not go away and exhorted everyone to vote in November 'according to their sober Christian, serious, sympathetic, faithful judgement—and then God will see us through'.

However, earlier voting figures quoted by McClean suggest that there has been a distinct shift in opinion. He cited the results of an earlier reference of the question to the dioceses in 1975, when they were asked if they approved of women priests in principle and if legislation should be introduced. Then, 59.6 per cent of the clergy and 71.1 per cent of the laity approved in principle, but only 49.9 per cent of the clergy and 65 per cent of the laity favoured legislation.

The synod went on to consider two of contemporary Britain's major scandals: homelessness, and the effect on the mentally-ill of the policy of community care.

In a motion initiated by the Southwell diocesan synod and passed with no dissenting votes, the synod called on the church commissioners, parochial church councils, diocesan boards of finance, and globe management committees to co-operate in managing their resources so as to increase the nation's stock of housing at rents that low-income people could afford, and asked for an investigation (and remedying) of any legal obstacles there might be to this.

A resolution on community care welcomed recent government initiatives to extend community care for mentally ill people. The resolutions also urged the government to make further initiatives and funding available for the mentally-ill and recognized that caring for the mentally ill is a challenge for both the church voluntary groups

[EPS]

Department of Ecumenical Relations

A report of the Visit of the Team, Dornakal and Karimnagar Dioceses to England in April, 1992



Members of the Team

Rev. Y. Vedarathnam, Mr. D. Nirmalkumar, Mrs. Y. Roseleen of Dornakal Diocese, Rev. K. Edward Jayakumar, Mr. V. Y. Jyothikumar, Mrs. K. Kanthamani of Karimnagar Diocese.

Rev. J. M. Jogula—Director, Department of Ecumenical Relations—Leader.

The Synod Department of Ecumenical Relations arranged this visit in its South-North Exchange Visit Programme.

An Orientation for the Team members was arranged at Madras on 17th and 18th March, 1992. Our Moderator, the Most Rev. Dr. B. R. Devapriam, Rev. Dr. Arun Gopal—Director PAD and Christian Education, Rev. Dass Babu—Director, Communications Department, Dr. Richard of CTVT, Dr. W.A.F. Hooper—Director, Council of Education and myself gave information about various ministries of the CSI and also practical guidance for this visit.

On 4th April, 1992 we arrived in Heathrow Airport, London. Rev. Richard Handforth of CMS received us at the Airport and took us to Selley Oak, Birmingham. We stayed in Leasow House. On 4th and 5th April, orientation was given to the group.

Rev. Geoff Weaver, Rev. Richard Handforth and Rev. Verghese spoke on the following topics :
Britain Scene—General and Political.
Multicultural Society and Religious pluralism.
Issues facing the church.

The team members had to reflect on the following questions :

- (i) What do you want to gain from your visit ?
- (ii) What do you have to offer to the host churches ?

These orientation sessions were very helpful in understanding about the churches here and helped the members of the Team to have meaningful visit to this country.

The members of the group were accommodated in different houses. The families received them lovingly and gave very good hospitality during the days they stayed there.

The group visited different churches, institutions and had the privilege of meeting church people and the people of Inter-Religious Faith Fellowship. The group was

surprised by the way in which the Inter-Religious faith groups and Asian Communities are growing in England. They also had the experience of seeing lively churches and churches which are losing their members and are being closed down.

On 10th April, the group went to York—a seat of one of the Archbishops of the Church of England. We had the privilege of participating in a prayer service in the Cathedral and tour in the Cathedral and in the city.

The Rt. Rev. David Evans, the Assistant Bishop of the Bradford Diocese, invited us to tea and explained in brief about the Church of England and its functioning. Two of the team members including me stayed in the Bishop's house.

Members of our group stayed in different houses during the week. Since it was Holy Week we had to participate in different worship services in different churches and in the Central Church—The Ecumenical Church of Christ the Cornerstone. Here we experienced ecumenism in action. The Church of Christ the Cornerstone stands as united Church built jointly by the protestants and catholics.

We celebrated Good Friday and Easter in Milton Keynes.

On Monday the 20th April 1992, we moved to London. We were received by Rev. Richard Handforth and he brought us to Methodist International House where we stayed during the last week of our stay in England. In that evening we participated in 'Resurrexit' worship in the spirit of the ecumenical community of Taizé in France, in the St. Martin in the Fields Church in London. Next day we had a session in the same church, with Rev. Martin Henwood. He spoke on 'The Role of the church in Central London'. After that we attended the Lunch time Concert in the Church.

On 22nd the group went to Oxford where they were received by Rev. Alan Simmons, who was until recently Secretary of the Oxfordshire Ecumenical Council. Seeing historical places and colleges enriched their experiences. The group was also shown the Blackbird Leys Local Ecumenical project.

On 23rd we met at the Inter-Church House for evaluation. Rev. Richard Handforth, Rev. Gordon Shaw, Mrs. Helen Lidgett of CCBI, Mrs. Jenny Carpenter, Field Officer of the Churches Together in England were present. The group expressed its satisfaction over the programme. They expressed their disappointments about poor attendance in the Church service, church buildings

being closed or given away etc. The group did not get many opportunities to share their experiences because of the lenten programmes. There was no chance of meeting with youth.

It was also expressed that the time spent for orientation was not enough. More information about the churches in England would have helped the group to understand the present situation in England. A concern was expressed about the growing influence of other religious faiths and weakening of the church witness.

The group appreciated the love and hospitality given by all the hosts at different places and thanked CMS, CCBI for making all the good arrangements for this visit.

On Saturday, the 25th we participated in the service of the 'Inauguration of the Friends of the Church in India' at the American church, 79 Tottenham Court Road, London.

Rt. Rev. Lesslie Newbigin and the Rt. Rev. Ananda Rao Samuel were the celebrants. Dr. Mary Tanner, Secretary of the Council for Church Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England, was the preacher. After the Church service there was lunch and cultural programme. Our group presented a Telugu Song and I conveyed the greeting of the CSI.

DIRECTOR'S VISITS/MEETINGS

On my request, Mrs. Helen Lidgett, Secretary of Education and Exchange of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, had arranged special programmes for me.

1. Visit to Lincoln

On 6th April 1992, from Birmingham I went to Lincoln. Rev. Geoff Towell of the Church of England had organised a meeting of the members of Lincolnshire Ecumenical Council.

Representatives of the Church of England—Lincoln Diocese, Methodist Church, United Reformed Church, Society of Friends Baptist Church—Participated. At the end of the meeting Bishop of Lincoln also attended. The Lincolnshire Ecumenical Council-Churches Together will take a decision to link with the Tirunelveli Diocese of CSI. If the majority of the members of the Council accept this proposal, will receive a team from Tirunelveli Diocese in 1993 and a return visit by the Council will take place in 1994.

2. Meeting with Bishop Lesslie Newbigin

I met Bishop Lesslie Newbigin at his house in 15 Fox Hill, Birmingham on 9th April 1992, Bishop shared with

me all the books he has on Church Union and suggested to refer all the minutes of the Union Negotiations Committee which may be found in Union Theological Seminary at New York.

3. Meeting with Rev. Andrew Prasad

From Milston Keynes, I had to go to London on Tuesday the 14th April 1992 and meet Rev. Andrew Prasad, Personnel Secretary of the Council for World Mission. We discussed the South Exchange Visit Programme of the CSI.

Rev. Prasad has given me some addresses of the member Churches of CWM in African countries. He has agreed to consider granting financial assistance to the Church in the third world countries which are members of the CWM, in case a request comes from them well in advance for return visit to CSI.

He appreciated the arrangement of the CSI in establishing the Department of Ecumenical Relations which is taking care of organising exchange visits.

4. Meeting in Edinburgh : Scotland

On Wednesday, the 22nd April 1992, I had to travel from London to Edinburgh by train to attend a meeting in the Church of Scotland Office in Edinburgh. Rev. Dr. John Munro, Asia Secretary, World Mission and Unity of the Church of Scotland had arranged the meeting. Rev. Munro and four from three presbyteries of the Church of Scotland namely Lothian Presbytery, Gordon Presbytery and Irvine and Kilmarnock Presbytery attended the meeting.

We discussed the possibility of exchange visits which will help us to establish bilateral partnership in the day to come. It was agreed that the Presbyteries of the Church of Scotland visit the CSI Diocese in the month of November or December 1992 or January 1993 and in return our Team visit Scotland in June 1993.

Thanks

I take this opportunity to thank all those who helped us in making this visit possible and successful—The officers of the CSI Synod, Rev. Gordon Shaw, Mrs. Lidgett of CCBI, Rev. Peter Leung, Rev. R. Handfort and others of CMS, Rev. Dr. John Munro and others of the Church of Scotland, Rev. Geoff Towell, Rev. Mr. Craven, Rev. Andrew Prasad, Dr. Lewis Burton, Rev. Hugh Cross, and all the hosts for their kind help and cooperation.

REV. J. M. JOGULA,
Director,

Summer Programmes of the CSI Synod Departments of Christian Education and Pastoral Aid Ministry

Tamilnadu-Kerala Regional Sunday School Teachers' Training Conference was held at Methodist Hill, Kodaikanal, from May 4-9, 1992. This conference was jointly organised by the CSI Synod Department of Christian Education, and The All India Sunday School Association (a related agency of NCCI).

Nearly twenty Sunday School Teachers representing the CSI Dioceses of Tamilnadu and Kerala, attended this crash course, which was intended to produce resource persons for the diocesan level training programmes. Besides the Rev. Joshua Inbakumar—General Secretary AISSA and Dr. Arun Gopal there were other eminent Christian educators such as the Rt. Rev. Dr. D. Pothiyajulu, Dr. Arthur Jeyakumar (TTS) and Mr. Joseph Mani (Madhya Kerala), giving leadership to this programme. They dealt with a variety of subjects viz. History and Development of Sunday School Movement, Developmental stages, Faith Formation, Biblical and Educational Perspectives in Christian Education, and Teaching Methods.

Worship, Bible-Studies, group reflection and interaction were other essential features of the morning, afternoon and evening sessions. The participants welcomed this regional programme, as it provided opportunities for the participation of more people, and interaction in their mother tongue. The CSI Department of Christian Education is grateful to the Officers of AISSA for their kind co-operation.

Pastors' Study and Reflection Programme (PA-STU-RE) provides facilities to the Pastors and their spouses, to have a brief period of rest and reflection. This year sixteen Pastors and spouses spent ten days at Vishranthi Nilayam, Bangalore from May 9-18, 1992. Many participants brought with them theological and devotional books. Few made use of the library facilities at the United Theological College, Bangalore. Dr. Arun Gopal, Director,

Pastoral Aid Department presided over the plenary sessions and led the closing devotions on the last day.

Tenth Inter-Diocesan Pastors' Conference held at the Christa Sevakee Ashram, Parpale (Karnataka Southern Diocese) from May 19-23, 1992 brought together nearly ninety Pastors and their spouses, from the four regions of South India. The conference was inaugurated by the Most Rev. Dr. B. R. Devapriam, Moderator, CSI after the opening worship led by the diocesan Bishop the Rt. Rev. D. P. Shettian.

This conference was jointly organised by the Church Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) and the CSI Pastoral Aid Department. Dr. Christopher L. Furtado, Dr. J.S. Sadananda, Dr. Arun Gopal and the Rev. Dass Babu highlighted the different divisions of the CSI Synod theme 'Good News To All Creation'.

Mr. Joseph P. John, Chief Zonal Officer CASA (Madras) spoke on the Developmental Ministries of the Church. Mrs. Sarojini Devapriam discussed the practical aspects of Christian Discipleship. The Rt. Rev. Jason S. Dharmaraj—Chairman PAD and Deputy Moderator CSI delivered two addresses on 'Preaching Today—Biblical Perspectives and Practical Issues'.

The Pastors and their spouses played a key role in the morning Holy Communion services led by the Moderator, Deputy Moderator and the Diocesan Bishop. Evening services were led by regional groups. Special songs were taught by the participants in regional languages. The participants made a rich contribution during group discussions and plenary session.

DR. ARUN GOPAL,
Director.

You and Your God

'Tell me who your God is, I will tell you what you are'

DR. GNANA ROBINSON

'Fortunately our "dear God" is not a Neo-Nazi'. This was the heading of a piece of news in a leading German newspaper a couple of days back (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, 23rd March 1992, p. 4). As I read this news, I was saying to myself, 'nevertheless, for many people the "dear God" is a Neo-Nazi, as it is evident from what is happening in many parts of the world today (e.g. : the hatred towards foreigners in many countries in Europe, the white racism in South Africa, the caste-atrocities in India !)'. It is normally said, 'Tell me who your friend is, I will tell you what you are'. But one can as well say, 'Tell me who your God is, I will tell you what you are.'

Our conception of God reflects very much our outlook on life—our life-style, our world-view, our understanding of others and our relation to others. A racist believes in a racist god, a revengeful person believes in a revenging god, a warring person believes in a warrior god, a capitalistic, consumeristic person believes in a capitalistic God attired in costly garments and adorned with a crown or gold studded with the costliest precious stones of the world, a person who is incapable of suffering believes in an impossible god.

Many native tribes of Africa and South and North America were totally eliminated from the earth by the white, Christian colonisers from Europe in those days, because these Christians of Europe believed those native tribes to be sub-human or not belonging to the human race. The racists of our time also hold a similar view regarding people of other races. Obviously they believe in a racist god ! After the bombing of the Israelite embassy in Buenos Aires, David Levy, the foreign minister of Israel, said to his people repeatedly 'The Lord will avenge your blood' (*Frankfurter Rundschau* 21st March 1992, p. 2). His god is apparently an avenging god. During the Gulf war, many Christians in Europe and U.S.A. called the onesided killing in the Gulf-region as 'Just War' and accompanied it supporting it with regular prayers and worships in their churches. Their god is obviously a warrior God who does not care for the lives of innocent people in the region.

Many people create thus their own 'gods' or 'idols' (Jesus called the 'god' of the rich as 'Mammon') in the place of the true God who revealed himself in our Lord Jesus Christ, and worship such gods of their own making. It is therefore very important for us, who believe in the true God, to test and see what our conception of God is, lest we miss the true Way.

God says, 'I am God and not man' (Hosea 11 : 9) which in fact implies that God cannot simply be the projection of human likes and dislikes and fantasies. Isaiah therefore says, 'Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near ; *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,*' says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts' (Isaiah 55 : 6, 8, 9).

It is therefore important that we in our pursuit after knowing God first learn to discern the limits of human reason, the thoughts of our flesh and blood, the thoughts that are conditioned by the pushes and pulls of this material world and to enter the realm of the Spirit, the realm of God.

'Be still, and know that I am God,' says God (Psalms 46 : 10). Knowing God, what He really is, is a life-long process. No amount of theological learning and scholarship can exhaust our knowledge of the mystery of the being of God. Through prayer and meditation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we have to cross the human limits and enter into the realm of the Spirit of God. As St. Paul says, 'No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit' (1 Corinthians 2 : 11-13).

Our internal insight in the Spirit into the being of God reveals to us that our God is a God of life who cannot be a party to any force that works towards death. He is a God of love who is capable of suffering with those who suffer and dying with those who die in order to lead them to life. He is the risen Lord who has the power to vanquish the forces of death at all areas and guide those who 'walk through the valley of death' to life. Such an insight into the being of God changes our own being and fosters the life in us, equipping us thus to foster the life in others. As such, one who knows the God of life, can also be no party to the forces of death in this world. Such a person becomes an instrument in the hand of God to work towards life bringing reconciliation where conflicts arise, justice where injustice rules and peace where hostility prevails. It is for this purpose all of us, the children of the only true God, are called. It is also part of our calling to expose the true nature of the false gods of many people who promote death.

What makes a Missionary Congregation

REV. GERHARD LINN

1. Missionary congregations are committed communities of followers of Jesus who invite others to *join them in learning from Jesus*.

2. Learning from Jesus means, above all, understanding anew time and again that God loves all people—and that he gives us the privilege of being cooperators or instruments of his love.

The decisive criterion for a missionary congregation is that people can experience God's love within or through—and not its numerical growth.

3. Jesus broadens the horizon of the communities of his pupils, he awakens their interest in all the people in that particular place and in other places: so missionary congregations make an effort to get to know and to understand other people:

- With whom are we living? Who are our neighbours and contemporaries?
- What are the concerns of the people around us—what are their burdens and what are their joys?
- Who among them has the most urgent need to experience God's loving care for them?
- Which of the promises of the gospel applies to them particularly?

4. This kind of effort to understand others is a concrete challenge to missionary congregations in their contexts to translate the ancient promises of the gospel for the present and to live and act accordingly. They discover what their tasks are and tackle them with the available gifts.

This can lead to the discovery that the Holy Spirit really does give each person a specific gift to be used for the benefit of others (cf. I Cor. 12). Missionary congregations are communities in which each person can contribute to the life and service of the community, in which

each person can have the experience of being needed by God as his fellow-worker.

5. Even when all the gifts in a congregation have been uncovered and are being used, there will be many tasks which exceed the capacity of individual congregations. Therefore missionary congregations will look for partners. Missionary congregations are interested in cooperation, in ecumenical cooperation with congregations of other denominations, also cooperation with non-Christians. This can entail learning that mission does not only mean existing *for* others but also living and cooperating *with* them.

6. Many challenges to which missionary congregations wish to respond in their context are of a global nature and cannot be tackled merely locally. Therefore missionary congregations endeavour to grasp the global dimensions of these challenges and to act as part of the worldwide church.

Relationships of partnership with congregations in other parts of the world can provide an experience of suffering and rejoicing together (I Cor. 12: 26).

'Every local congregation needs the awareness of its catholicity which comes from its participation in the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ in other parts of the world, and its sharing of persons and resources, it participates fully in the world mission of the Christian Church.' (Mission and Evangelism—An Ecumenical Affirmation, no. 37, p. 3).

7. As learning congregations missionary congregations are always open to surprises, prepared to learn something new, prepared to be led by the Holy Spirit in unexpected ways. In their worship they constantly seek the will of God for today. They rely on the assurance that God is guiding them and the whole of humankind with its history to his goal of the renewal of creation, and they praise God for this assurance despite all the threats to the future of humanity. (Eph. 1, 10-12)



NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

DIOCESE OF MADURAI-RAMNAD

MISSION IN ECOLOGY

MRS. JESSIE JEYAKARAN, B.SC., M.A., M.Ed., *Madurai*

According to the recommendation of the first Inter-governmental Conference on Environmental Education held at Tbilisi USSR in October, 1977, the basic aim of Environmental Education is to succeed in making individuals and communities understand the complex nature of the natural and the built environment resulting from the interaction of the biological, physical, social, economic and cultural aspects and acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes and practical skills to participate in a responsible and effective way in anticipating and solving social problems and in the management of the quality of the environment.

In order to sensitize the students in the above-mentioned way, the MISSION IN ECOLOGY was started during a seminar cum workshop on School Environmental Education, held at Kodaikanal from 19th April to 21st April, 1990 sponsored by the Council for Education, CSI Synod, Madras in collaboration with the Apostolate of the Laity Department of the Diocese of Madurai-Ramnad. Under the able leadership of Rt. Rev. Dr. D. G. Pothirajulu, the Bishop of Madurai-Ramnad Diocese and Dr. W. A. F. Hopper, the Director of Council for Education, CSI Synod, Madras, the Eco-consciousness was inculcated in the teacher participants. The necessity for creating environmental awareness in students, parents and the public was explained by Dr. Edwin Chandrasekaran, Head of the Department of Environmental Science, Bishop Heber College, Trichy. Topics like global warming, Greenhouse effect and depletion of Ozone layer were clearly dealt with by Dr. Peter Jayapandian, the Principal of American College, Madurai. With the vision in Environmental protection, the Missioner and seven contact persons were selected at the Diocese level.

It was thought that the Eco-clubs of Mission in Ecology could give the students scope for creativity and would encourage them to be aware of the environmental problems and make them attempt to solve them in a logical manner. In order to have a well-planned year's activity, a 3-day workshop was organised at O.C.P.M.G.H.S.S. Madurai during the month of June 1990. The year's plan was finalised starting from the celebration of World Environmental Day (June 5th) to February insisting on cleanliness, tree plantation, Eco-garden Eco-contests, Eco-exhibitions and Eco-camp.

The Objectives of Mission in Ecology

- (a) Protection and improvement of fauna and flora
- (b) Taking appropriate steps to minimize pollution
- (c) Caring for community health and hygiene.
- (d) Conserving the available resources.

Eco-clubs were started in all the High and Higher Secondary Schools of our Diocese with the inauguration functions, in places like Madurai, Ramnad, Dindigul and Satchiapuram, (Sivakasi west). In order to give guidelines a Leadership Training programme on 'Towards an Ecological worldview for the Mission of the Church' Educational Institutions sponsored by National Development Advisory Council of NCCI, Nagpur was conducted during September 1991 to the teachers of girls Institutions. Topics like Eco-spirituality, Ecological worldview and faith and Ecology, Ecumenics and Economics; the Role of Educational Institutions towards Eco-concerns, Environment and health and Community Health were discussed. In continuum with the above mentioned programme during the month of November, a 2-day workshop was conducted to focus the attention to the village level schools. The participants enjoyed the session well because of the topics like Bio-village, Bio-fertilizers and energy.

With the experience gained during the workshop, the teacher-participants and the Heads of the institutions like to help the young people to achieve the moral aims related to the crucial current problems mankind is facing today. We have given considerable thought this year to Environmental protection. But slowly I have realised that although our task is national, we need to have some intense programmes to teachers handling the Environmental Education at the primary school level.

A. Approaches to Environmental Education in Schools

1. Eco-educational tour (within the school campus/city/town).
2. Observation.
3. Art from waste.
4. Environmental games;
5. Environmental news gathering.
6. Environmental activities.
7. Eco-experiments.
8. Environmental tracts.
9. Environmental exhibition.

B. A guide for Environmental Survey : School Environments

Preparation of Maps and graphs about the School

1. Layout sketch of the school.
2. Details about the surrounding area such as industry, River/Bus stand/Solid waste dumping area.
3. School Strength (Staff and Students).

4. A pie diagram highlighting the green area/play-ground/the wasteland etc.
5. Tabulate the green area (Trees, plants, shrubs etc.).
6. Water sources-details.
7. Basic amenities-drinking water, Lavatory facilities.

My sincere thanks are due to our Bishop Rt. Rev. D. G. Pothirajulu for his timely advice and guidance to our Bishopamma Mrs. Kasturi Pothirajulu for her relentless interest and action towards eco-concerns, to the Centre for Environmental Education, Ahmedabad for having given me training in Environmental Education since 1987, to Prof. J. E. M. Arputhamoorthy, chairman, I.L.D., DMR for his guidance, to the resource persons for their continued interest and to the teacher-trainees who have responded to this Mission with enthusiasm and have given their time and energy to help me.

SOUTH KERALA DIOCESE

Moderator inaugurates Theological Study Centre

Most Rev. Dr. Ryder Devapriyam, Moderator of the Church of South India inaugurated the 'Moderator Jesudasan Study Centre' at a solemn function held at the LMS Compound, Trivandrum on Friday, July 10. Emphasising the need for such centres of theological learning and extolling the initiative of the South Kerala Diocese, the Moderator commented upon the appropriateness of naming the Centre after Moderator I. Jesudasan who had been a teacher and principal of the Kerala United Theological Seminary before he became Bishop and whose contributions to theological study in India are considerable. Theological training need not necessarily be professional only. The laity, trained in theology will be a blessing to any diocese as they learn to meet the needs in their own lives and also in the life of the Church in a way Jesus would want them to.

Former Moderator of the CSI, Most Rev. Dr. I. Jesudasan who was present on the occasion said that the study

of the Bible is all the more important in the present-day context, as a student of the Bible alone can be humble before God.

Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Samuel Amirtham welcomed the Moderator and said that Bible study and theological reflection will help the laity to grow in mature Christian faith and for effective witnessing in the world, particularly in their secular professions.

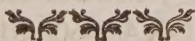
This Centre, organised in association with the VELCOM programme of the Synod enjoys very good response from the laity. The initiative came from our Bishop, Sam Amirtham because of his conviction that theological education should be popularised and be made available not merely to the clergy but to the whole people of God.

The Centre has 5 units in the diocese and 125 lay people—that being the maximum proposed strength—have enrolled themselves for training. Rev. John Samuel Raj of the KUT Seminars is appointed Registrar. These Units, called LIFT (Laity Institute For Theology) give one-year and two-year theological training. The Professors of the KUTS and other postgraduate degree holders from among the clergy of the diocese do the teaching.

Later, the Moderator addressed a gathering of more than 300 Pastors and other Church Workers. Rev. Dr. J. W. Gladstone, Principal of the KUTS was also present. The Moderator reminded the Ministers that they were called upon to identify themselves with the lowliest of the lowly even as Jesus Christ himself did. In the meanwhile they should also glorify Jesus as the Messiah, the redeemer.

This was the Moderator's first official visit to our diocese and it turned out to be an occasion of rich blessing for both the clergy and the laity.

(Correspondent : Prof. JAMES M. STEWART)



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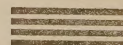
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